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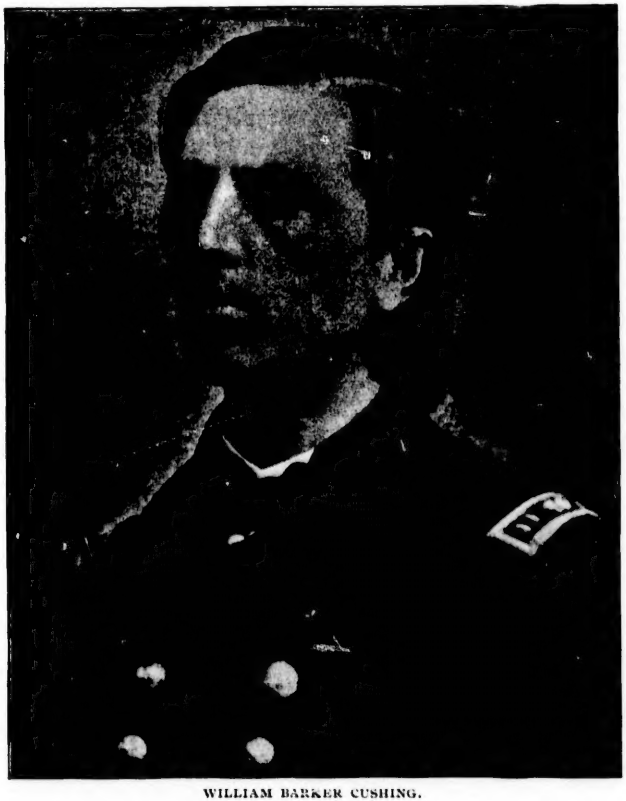
TWO MODERN KNIGHTS ERRANT.

By General James Grant Wilson.

IT is curious how impartially the birthplaces of the most illustrious actors in the late civil war, of whom there are only two survivors, were distributed throughout the United States. The two presidents of that period, Lincoln and Davis, were natives of Kentucky; Grant, Sherman and Stanton of Ohio; Seward and Sheridan of New York; Thomas, Lee, Joseph E. Johnston and "Stonewall" Jackson were born in Virginia; Farragut and Forrest in Tennessee; Hancock, McClellan and Admiral Porter in Pennsylvania; Andrew Johnson in North, and Fremont in South, Carolina; Longstreet in Alabama; Beauregard in Louisiana; Chase in New Hampshire, and Adams and Sumner in Massachusetts, while the Northwest gave us the young naval hero and le beau sabreur who are the subjects of this sketch.



WILLIAM BARKER CUSHING.

"All history," remarks Emerson, "resolves itself into the biographies of a few stout and earnest persons." The first of these two stout and exceedingly earnest persons with whom we have to do in this paper, William Barker Cushing, was born in Delafield, Wisconsin, November 4, 1842. After a few years' attendance at the Fredonia academy, Chautauqua county, New York, to which state the family had removed after his father's death, young Cushing received in 1853 the position of page in the House of Representatives. Four years later he was appointed a cadet at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Cushing resigned March 21, 1861, and in May he volunteered in the navy, was made a master's mate, and the very day after his arrival at Hampton Roads captured and brought into port a tobacco schooner, the first prize of the war. He was attached to the North Atlantic blockading squadron, and repeatedly distinguished himself by successful acts of daring. Cushing was commissioned lieutenant in July 1862, and in November he was ordered to the steamer Ellis, to capture Jacksonville, Florida, intercept the Wilmington, North Carolina,

mail and destroy the salt works at New Inlet. He captured a large mail, took two Confederate prizes, and shelled a Confederate camp, but was unable to cross the bar that night, and in the morning the steamer was aground. The crew transferred everything except the pivot gun to one of the captured schooners, and sailed for a place of safety a mile and a half away, but Cushing remained with six volunteers on board the steamer until she was disabled by a cross fire from the shore, when he burned her and escaped to the schooner. In 1863 he added to his repatation for bravery and good judgment by an expedition up the Cape Fear and Little rivers, and also by successful operations on the Nansemond. His most brilliant exploit, and one destined to rank high among the most daring of the four years' war, was the destruction, on the night of October 27, 1864, of the Confederate ironclad Albemarle, which Farragut said to the writer he deemed the most dauntless

CUSHING BLOWING UP THE ALBEMARLE.

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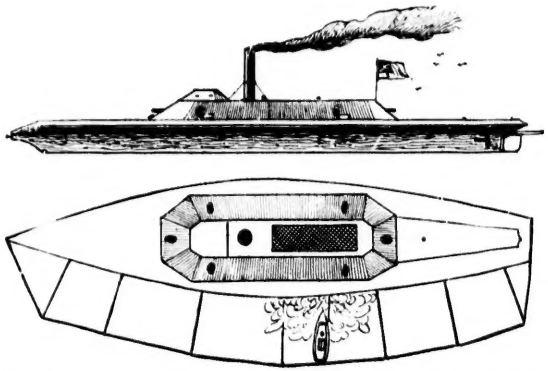


SECTION AND PLAN OF THE ALBEMARLE, SHOWING THE LOG BOOM AND POINT OF ATTACK.

naval deed ever performed by any young officer of the American navy. This powerful vessel had successfully encountered a strong fleet of Federal gunboats and fought them for several hours without sustaining material damage. There was nothing in the northern squadron able to cope with her, as was the case with the Merrimac, until Worden, with the Monitor, appeared in Hampton Roads. Cushing volunteered to destroy the Albemarle, and with a steam launch and a small crew he ascended the Roanoke river, towing an armed cutter. The river was lined with pickets to guard against just such an attack as this, but the lieutenant's luck did not desert him, and he was within a hundred yards of the ironclad ram before he was discovered. Casting off the cutter, he ordered her crew to attack a picket post near by, while, with a full head of steam, he drove the launch straight at the huge vessel, whose crew rushed to quarters and at once opened fire, Cushing replying effectively with his howitzer. A circle of heavy logs, boomed well out from her side, with the very purpose of preventing the action of torpedoes, was discovered by the young hero, but the boat was driven over them, as they had become slimy, and by the time the launch received her death wound from the enemy's guns, Cushing had coolly swung the torpedo boom under the Albemarle's overhang or bottom and exploded the charge. Ordering his crew to look out for themselves he sprang into the river, swam under water as far as possible, and in the darkness escaped alone, reaching the opposite bank half a mile below. As soon as he recovered his strength he plunged into the dense swamp and, after many hours of weary wandering and wading, came out upon the shore of a creek, where with his usual good luck he found a small picket boat, and at eleven o'clock the following night, almost dead from cold, hunger and fatigue, Cushing was carried on board the Valley City, a United States gunboat. As soon as it was known that he had returned after destroying the Albemarle, rockets were rejoicingly thrown up by every vessel of the fleet.

Deprived of the protection of the Albemarle, the squadron soon captured Plymouth and the surrounding country. Of the gallant fellows who volunteered to risk their lives with the fearless Cushing, but one escaped, all the others being either drowned, killed or captured. The lieutenant had little expectation of escaping death or imprisonment in carrying out his dangerous enterprise, in which, as he said to the writer, the chances were ten to one against him. To his brother officers he remarked as he was setting out to destroy the ironclad: "Another stripe or a coffin!" Five times he was officially complimented by the Secretary of the Navy, and for the affair of the Albemarle he received the thanks of Congress—the youngest Amer-

THE ESCAPE OF CUSHING.

CUSTER WHEN A CADET AT WEST POINT.

ican ever so honored—and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant commander. It may be safely asserted that the naval history of the world affords no other example of such marvellous coolness and professional skill as that exhibited by the young hero of only twenty-two in the destruction of the Albemarle.

At Fort Fisher, under a constant and heavy fire, Cushing buoyed out the channel in a small skiff, continuing the dangerous work for six hours, until completed. At the final assault he led a force of sailors and marines from the Monticello in an attack on the sea front of the fort, and amid an unceasing fire at short range, which cut down many of his men, he crossed 100 yards of sand, rallied his force and afforded such efficient service to the troops that before midnight Fort Fisher was surrendered. After the close of the war Cushing served in the Pacific and Atlantic squadrons, being in command of the steamer Lancaster in 1866-7 and of the Maumee in 1868-9. On the return of the latter vessel to the United States he was advanced to the grade of Commander in January 1872, being the youngest officer of that rank in the American navy. His health demanding rest and relief from duty he was allowed leave of absence, but his constitution was completely undermined by exposure and over-exertion, and he died of brain fever in Washington, District of Columbia, December 17, 1874, at the early age of thirty-two, leaving behind him, in the words of Lord Byron :

"Fame more than enough to track his memory."

A vessel of our new navy has properly and most appropriately been named the Cushing in his honor.

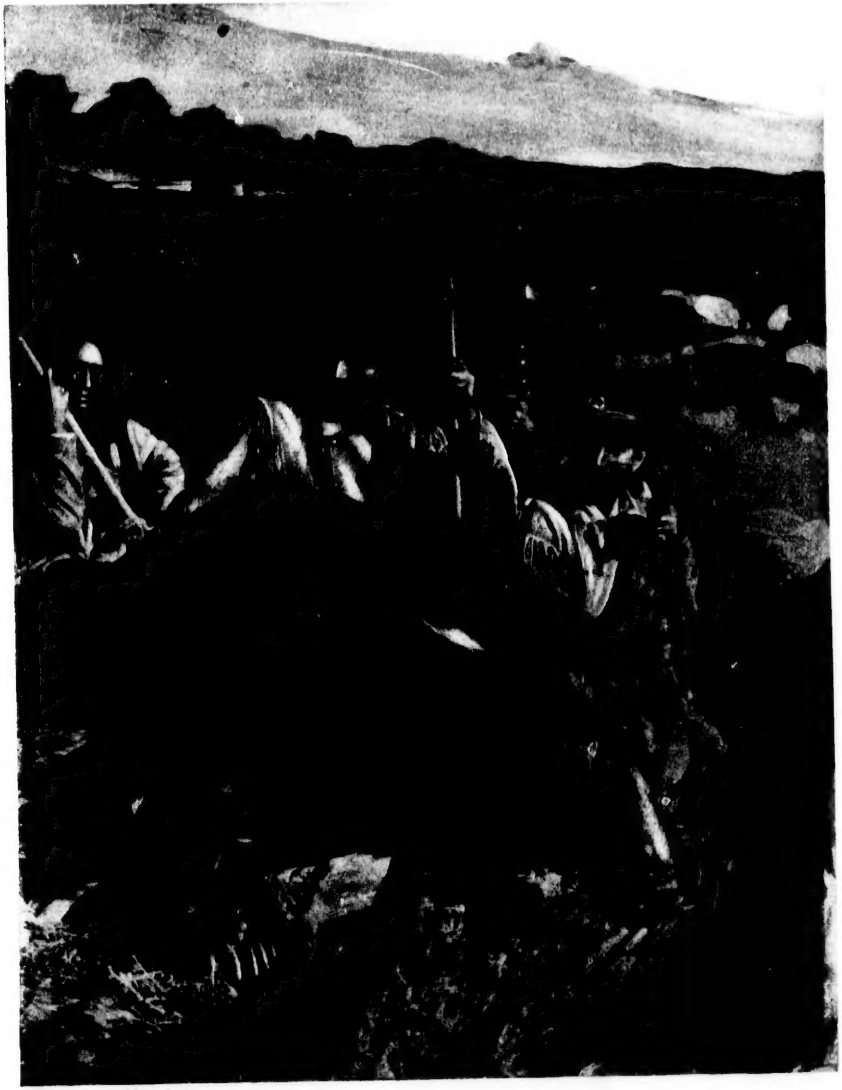
Our other young hero, George Armstrong Custer, the son of an Ohio farmer, was born in Harrison county, December 5, 1839. He was graduated at the United States Military academy in June 1861, the lowest but one in his class, owing to his love of fun and mischief. Custer used laughingly to claim, in later years, that it required more skill to graduate next to the foot of the class than at the head, as to keep within one of going out and yet escape being dropped was a serious problem. He possessed great strength and was a good as well as fearless rider, taking the highest leap ever made at West Point, with a single exception, when, in 1841, Cadet U. S. Grant, mounted on "York," a powerfully built chestnut sorrel, cleared a bar raised six feet and five inches, the highest jump recorded in the military records of the old world or the new.* Custer was so eager for active duty that he declined the usual leave of absence and immediately reported at Washington. General Scott gave him despatches to carry to McDowell, then in command of

* This record has been surpassed in civil life both in this country and abroad. In the Madison Square Garden, New York, on November 13, 1890, a famous horse cleared a height of seven feet.

the Army of the Potomac: he was assigned to duty as lieutenant in the Fifth cavalry and participated on the very day of his arrival at the front in the first battle of Bull Run. General Kearney selected him as an aide-de-camp, and he afterwards served on the staff of General William F. Smith. In May 1862, McClellan was so impressed with the energy he displayed in crossing the Chickahominy alone, in search of a ford for the army to pass over, that he was appointed aide with the rank of captain. Custer applied for permission to attack the enemy's picket post, and at daylight he surprised them, capturing prisoners and the first flags taken by the army of the Potomac. After McClellan's retirement from command Captain Custer returned to his regiment and had served with it only a short time when General Pleasanton, in May 1863, placed him on his staff. For daring gallantry in a skirmish at Aldie and in the action at Brandy station, as well as in the closing operations of the Rappahannock, he was appointed Brigadier-general of Volunteers, dating from June 1863, and assigned to duty as commander of the Michigan brigade. At Gettysburg his cavalry, with those of Gregg and McIntosh, defeated General Stuart's efforts to turn the left flank of Meade's army. For this substantial service he was brevetted major in the regular army. At Culpeper Court House Custer was wounded and his horse killed. He took part in Sheridan's cavalry raid toward Richmond in May 1864, and was brevetted lieutenant-colonel for the battle of Yellow Tavern. In General Sheridan's second movement against Richmond the Michigan brigade made a most gallant fight at Trevellion station, but so great was their peril that the colors of the brigade were only saved from capture by Custer tearing them from the standard held by the dying sergeant and concealing them under his coat. In September 1864 he was made brevet colonel in the United States army for gallantry at the battle of Winchester, and in October, Major-general of Volunteers, for Fisher's Hill. In September he assumed command of the Third division of cavalry, with which he was confronted by his former classmate General Rosser, whom he sent whirling through the valley for twenty-six miles, capturing all but one of his guns. At Cedar creek he fought the enemy from the first attack in the morning until the battle closed. His division recaptured, before the day was over, guns and flags that had been taken from the Federal army earlier in the fight, together with Confederate cannon and colors. After this great victory, Custer was sent to Washington with the captured flags and very strongly recommended for further promotion. In the spring of 1865, when Sheridan again moved his cavalry toward Richmond, the Third division alone fought and won the battle of Waynesboro, capturing seventeen stands of colors, eleven guns, 200 wagons and 1600 prisoners! For gallant services at Five Forks and Dinwiddie Court House, Custer was brevetted brigadier-general in the United States army in March 1865. In a general order

GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER.

addressed to his division, dated Appomattox Courthouse, in April, he said: "During the past six months, although in most instances confronted by superior numbers, you have captured from the enemy in open battle 111 pieces of field artillery, sixty-five battle-flags and upwards of 10,000 prisoners of war, including seven general officers. You have never lost a gun, never lost a color and never been defeated; and notwithstanding the numerous engagements in which you have borne a prominent part, including those memorable battles of the Shenandoah, you have captured every piece of artillery which the enemy have dared to open upon you."



By Courtesy of Mrs. Custer.

CUSTER'S FIRST GRIZZLY. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

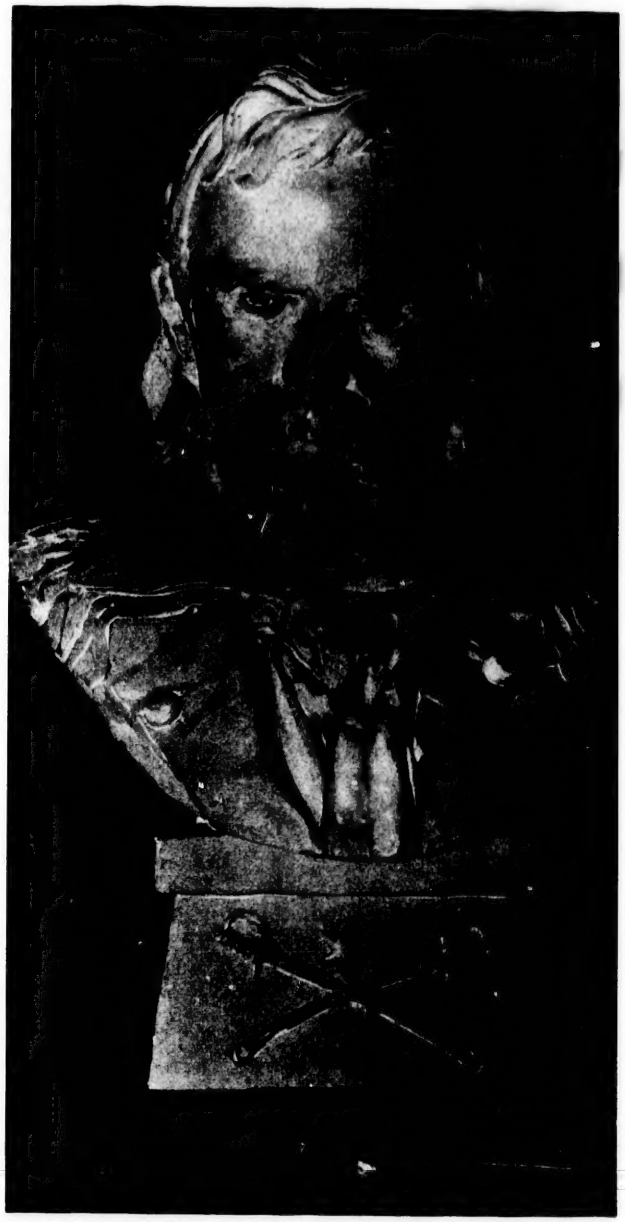
Custer was present at the surrender of General Lee. He is thus described by a Confederate captain who was with the troops marshalled in line for surrender: "Down that line came General Custer. By his yellow hair and boyish face he is known to all of us. Near the centre of the line he turns to his band and orders it to play 'Dixie.' As the marvellous strains of the Confederate war song float in liquid sweetness around us, we break into tumultuous cheering. General Custer waves his hat and a thousand gallant soldiers in blue dash their caps in the air. Such was General Custer in the presence of a conquered foe." In the same month, April, Custer was appointed Major-general of Volunteers. He participated in all but one of the important battles fought by the Army of the Potomac, and had eleven horses shot under him without ever being seriously wounded. After the war closed he led his famous division of cavalry for the last time on May 23, 1865, in the grand review of the two great armies of the east and the west by the president and his cabinet and General Grant, on which occasion Custer's high-spirited thoroughbred became frightened and ran away with him. On the second day that veteran army appeared, whose drums had been heard from Ohio to the sea and back again to the Potomac. What mighty cheers from a hundred thousand spectators filled the air as Sherman passed along Pennsylvania avenue at the head of those invincible veterans who had marched through eight rebellious states! With what an easy, careless, accurate swing the gaunt veterans moved forward! How weatherbeaten and bronzed, and how dingy, as if the smoke of numberless battlefields had dyed their well-worn garments and the soil of camps and battlegrounds had adhered to them! And the flags they carried! Terrible is an army with banners, if those banners are riddled and torn by the shot and shell of a hundred hotly contested fields. Belmont, Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Resaca, Atlanta and Bentonville are a few of the names that were written in bullet holes on the tattered and weatherbeaten banners. But no other standards, however gorgeous with new beauty, could be half so interesting to the thoughtful observer, and it is not surprising that the usually calm and impassive countenance of Grant glowed with deep feeling as the historic colors were borne along by the men who had followed his victorious course from Cairo to Vicksburg, and from Vicksburg had marched with Sherman through the very centre of the Confederacy. Perfect harmony prevailed among the partisans of both armies of the Potomac and of the Tennessee. The country was proud of them, and their review was the most magnificent military spectacle ever witnessed on the American continent. As the quiet dispersion of a million of well seasoned soldiers, who laid aside their swords to return to the paths of peace, it was perhaps the grandest and most significant event of the nineteenth century. Said Mr. Gladstone to the writer: "If I were an American there is no page in her history of which I should feel so proud."

After the review General Custer was sent to Texas to command a division of cavalry and remained on this duty till March 1866, when he was mustered out of the volunteer service. He then applied to the War department for permission to accept from President Juarez the place of chief of the Mexican cavalry in the struggle against Maximilian. His application was refused, and Custer joined the Seventh cavalry at Fort Riley as lieutenant-colonel, serving on the plains for three years and winning the Indian battle of Wachita. In 1871 he was sent with his regiment to Kentucky, remaining there two years. In the spring of 1873 Custer went to Dakota and accompanied an expedition to the Yellowstone, fighting two engagements with the Sioux Indians. In July 1874 he led a column into the Black Hills, which resulted in a hitherto unexplored region being opened to civilization. In May 1876 he marched against the Sioux Indians, who were discovered encamped on the Little Big Horn river. On the 25th of June, without waiting for the infantry, as he was apprehensive the enemy would escape, an attack was made by a portion of the regiment under Major Reno, which was repulsed. Still unconvinced of his mistake, Custer charged on another part of the field, fighting against overwhelming numbers of well-armed foes and momentarily expecting to be joined by Reno, who was then in retreat. At the end of a fierce but hopeless fight the heroic leader, with his 277 followers, formed a bivouac of the dead.

Not a single soldier escaped to tell the sad story.* They were interred upon the battle-field, which in 1879 was made a national cemetery. A monument recording the name and rank of all who were slain was erected by the United States government on the spot where Custer made his last stand. In accordance with his own wish the young hero was buried with military honors at West Point, where a beautiful monument marks his resting place, near those of Winfield Scott and other illustrious soldiers. The story of his career has been written by Frederick Whittaker, and it also appears in Custer's volume entitled My Life on the Plains, as well as in three pleasant works written by Mrs. Custer. To this brief tribute to a gallant comrade the writer may add, as applicable to him, the poet's lines:

"Sweet in manners, fair in favor,
Mild in temper, fierce in fight,
Warrior nobler, gentler, braver,
Never shall behold the light."

Among the last letters received by the author of this article from Admiral David D. Porter was one in which he said: "I like to talk and write about the chivalrous Cushing. He was one of those brave spirits developed by the Civil War who always rose to the occasion. He was always ready to undertake any duty, no matter how desperate, and he



FROM A BUST IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS. CUSTER.

generally succeeded in his enterprises, from the fact that the enemy supposed that no man would be foolhardy enough to embark in such hazardous affairs, where there seemed so little chance of success. A very interesting volume could be written on the adventures of the gallant Lieutenant Cushing, from the time he entered the navy until his death, during which short period he performed some remarkable deeds and left a reputation unparalleled for so young an officer. . . .

"In many respects, Cushing and Custer were alike; what one was to the navy the other was to the army—dashing, reckless, brave men, strangers to fear, who never thought of the consequences to themselves in any undertaking, no matter how desperate. The two men were not only similar in character, but in person; their features were bold, the expression of the eyes the same, and both possessed lithe figures which seemed proof against fatigue. Put them side by side and they would have passed for brothers. Perhaps nature fashions that kind of men alike mentally and physically. Certain it is that Cushing and Custer were two of the most fearless spirits who made their marks in the two branches of the service during the Civil War."

* "General Terry never came under accusation but he did not wholly escape a kind of subdued and qualified criticism in connection with the Custer affair in 1876. It was inevitable that blame for that terrible but magnificent blunder should rest somewhere, and naturally upon the officer in command, whose subordinates are supposed to carry out his orders. That Custer should have fallen into such a trap would naturally reflect upon his superior. The facts in the case have never been generally known. It is permitted me to speak of them today without reserve, and I do so because General Terry's conduct in the matter seems to me to be the noblest act in his life and the truest index of his character. Custer's fatal movement was in direct violation of both verbal and written orders. When his rashness and disobedience ended in the total destruction of his command General Terry withheld the fact of the disobedience of orders, and suffered an imputation hurtful to his military reputation to rest upon himself rather than subject a brave but indiscreet subordinate to a charge of disobedience."—From Funeral Sermon, by the Reverend Doctor Theodore T. Munger, of New Haven, Connecticut, December 19, 1890.

By Courtesy of Mrs. Custer. CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT.